Systemic Design Portfolio

2013 – 2014

CoLab.

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Foreword

In March, 2012, 19 senior officials from across the Government of Alberta came together to participate in a six-day workshop on systems thinking, systemic design and how this methodology could be applied to policy development for Alberta's natural resource management system. The project we tested resulted in greater clarity on objectives, a framework for structuring collaboration, and a re-conceptualized mode of engaging with stakeholders that achieved alignment through strategic influence. The success of this initial workshop led to follow-on projects championed by many, if not most, Government of Alberta (GoA) departments. To enable these projects, we envisioned and built a design studio, the CoLab, where collaborative conversations and co-creation could be initiated.

So what is systemic design? Systemic design integrates systems thinking and design thinking to provide an elevated perspective on conflicting values, viewpoints, policy preferences, ideologies, and power relationships. Put another way, systems thinking compels us to consider our own "mental models" and involves shifting from looking at things to between things, thus allowing one to understand relationships, feedback loops, and interdependencies. This method allows Government to be more expansive and provides insights that may otherwise be missed when considering the myriad and often competing factors impacting the policy space and strategy setting.

I am proud that since 2012 more than 30 systemic design projects have been initiated from within the Government of Alberta. Today, we have an intensive training course on systemic design which runs quarterly, and a Systemic Design Community of Practice which contains more than 70 active participants and a small unit of specialized practitioners. This portfolio tells the story of these projects and systemic design and strategic foresight at the GoA.

Grant Sprague, Q.C.
Deputy Minister, Alberta Energy

Monitoring Agency Transition Design

Context

Duration: February 2013 – March 2013

Sponsor: Rick Blackwood, ESRD

Participants: 15 participants from ESRD, Future Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA) staff, and Executive Council

Framing Question

How might we:

1. Inform and/or question the larger Integrated Resources Management System (IRMS)?
2. Produce a clear, collective articulation of the Agency / ESRD system and its boundaries?
3. Produce clear divisions and relationships between ESRD and the Agency?

The picture on the right shows some of the legacy issues behind the current state of environmental monitoring and reporting in Alberta. The table below identifies the shift from a single-user system of record to a multi-user system of engagement.

From... Single-User Systems of Record	To... Multi-User System of Engagement
Alberta Advantage	Social Licence
Abundance of resources	Scarcity of resources
The data is mine: single user	The data is pooled: multiple users
Data as evidence	Data as asset
Local activity-based data collection	Cumulative effects monitoring
Good news	All news
Data as a record to be stored	Data as a flow to be shared
Output focused	Outcome focused
Data driven	Science driven
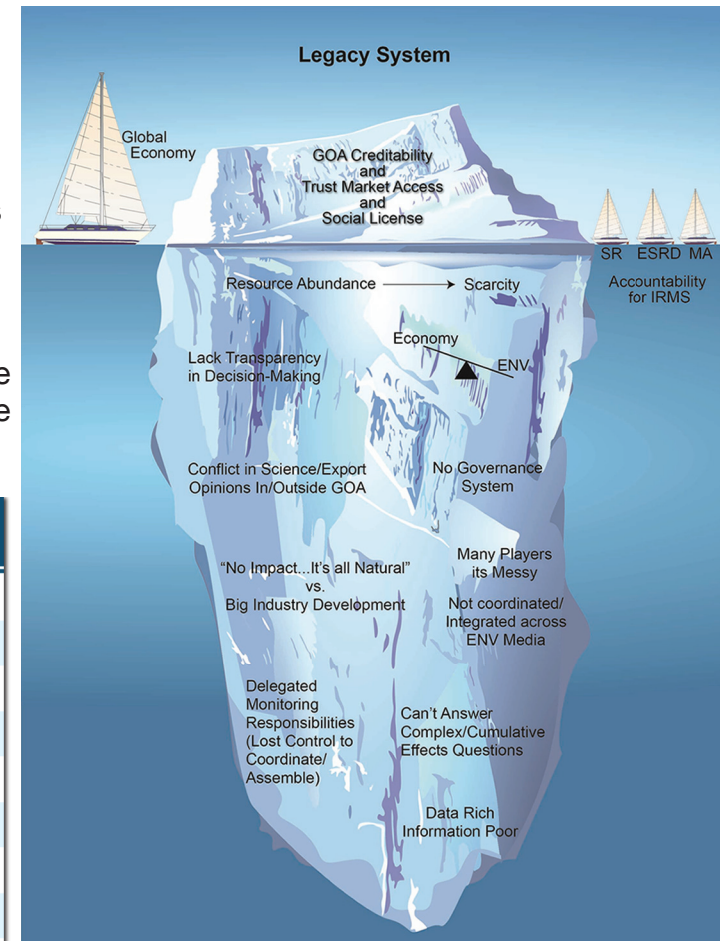
Legacy monitoring and reporting issues.

Monitoring Agency Transition Design
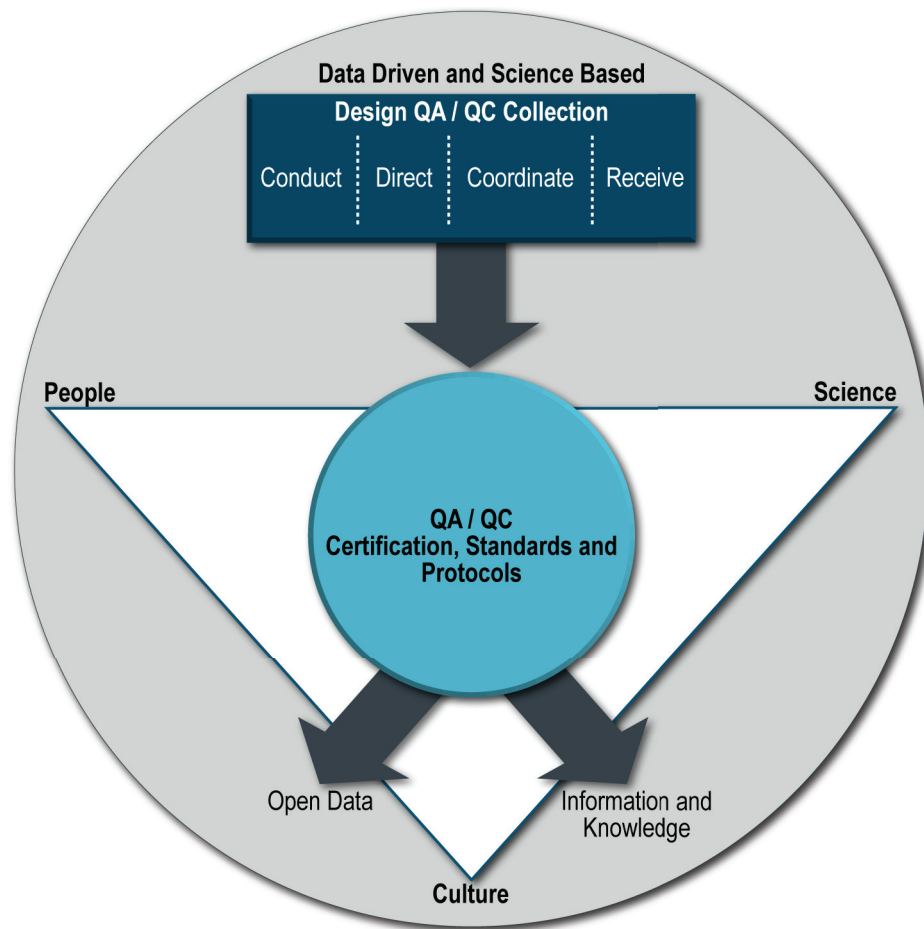
Outcomes

The Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA) was launched on May 22, 2014 to provide the timely and objective monitoring, evaluation and reporting of data and information on air, land, water and biodiversity, including information necessary to understand cumulative effects, in order to better inform the understanding of the public, policy makers, regulators, planners, researchers, communities, and industry.

Feedback

"This was a useful exercise to identify the key shifts and future state of AEMERA. This set the stage for further deliberations on roles and responsibilities within the IRMS."

Key Insights

- The challenge of transitioning to an arms-length monitoring agency cannot be met without also addressing relationships within the Integrated Resource Management System and the Government of Alberta.

- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the environment, while still evolving, is more advanced than for social and economic factors. This imbalance is a challenge to policy makers that may limit utility of environmental monitoring information.

- Because the context for resource development has fundamentally changed, so must our thinking about resource management.

- This is not just about designing the Monitoring Agency; ESRD will have to re-think its structures, functions, and purpose as a result of the transition.

- The key purpose of the Agency is to help build credibility and trust in the Integrated Resource Management System through transparency and a strong foundation of science.

- The key function of the Agency is to inform monitoring program design, data collection, and transform measurements into disseminated data, information, and knowledge.

Data Driven and Science Based

Design QA / QC Collection

| Conduct | Direct | Coordinate | Receive |

People

Science

QA / QC Certification, Standards and Protocols

Open Data

Information and Knowledge

Culture

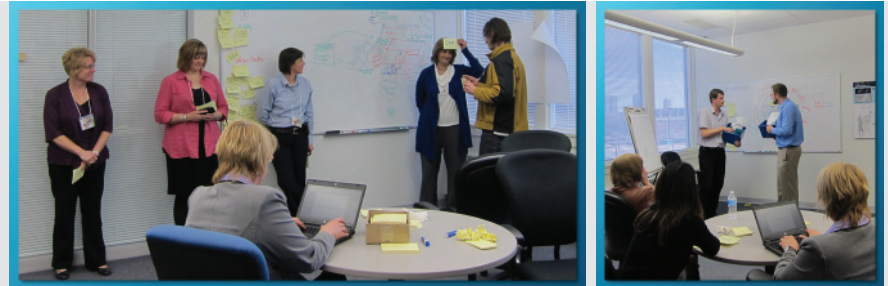**Exploring the function and purpose of the Monitoring Agency.**

Early Childhood Development

Context

Duration: April – August 2013

Sponsor: Sheryl Fricke, Human Services

Participants: 26 participants from Human Services, Education, and Health

Framing Question

How might we transform the Government of Alberta's approach to early childhood development towards cross-ministry, highly integrated decisions, with services and programs that are seamlessly navigated by parents and caregivers?

Through the use of empathy maps and journey maps, participants identified the following underlying needs for Albertan families:

- I need to be understood

- I need to be accepted

- I need to feel connected

- I need to feel supported

- I need to be valued

- I need to feel capable and in control

- I need to feel at peace

Mapping ways to meet the need of families to feel connected.

Innovative ideas were then generated to meet these needs. For example, in order to meet the need of feeling connected, the group developed the concept of bumping spaces, places where families can naturally connect, learn about services, ask questions, and provide answers while their children play (see photo above).

Early Childhood Development

Key Shifts

The new mindset of ecological stewardship provides a strength-based alternative that values the diversity of Albertan children as children. A new proactive approach places government in a role of facilitating and empowering choice at the local level, supporting those who support families. This new mindset will be shared between Health, Human Services, and Education, providing a common foundation for collaboration.

Feedback

"Looking through different lenses… …but similar views."

"Without today, we are even closer in thinking than I could have imagined."

Role-playing possible worlds to rapidly understand how they look and feel.

Key Insights

- Families care about relationships and supports, not programs.

- Government is most helpful when it intervenes indirectly: helping those who help families, removing barriers, creating spaces where families can help themselves, and connecting sister communities across the province.

- The old model for thinking about childhood development saw it as an industrial process, with the government as process manager.

- A new mind-set of ecological stewardship shifts the role of government towards a facilitator who empowers choice.

- Transformation is enabled by identifying, learning from, and scaling islands of "wow" – innovations and successes that are already working, both in communities and in government.

- There are over 200 community hubs across Alberta that are ideal places to prototype innovations that start transforming the early childhood development system.

- Ideas for prototyping include parent link phone lines, experimenting with existing natural bump spaces, and providing communities with opportunities to enter into mentoring relationships.

Common Risk Management Framework

Context

**Duration:** May 2013 – January 2014

Sponsor: Wade Clark, Policy Management Office

Participants: 60 participants from Government of Alberta (ESRD, PMO, DOE, TPR & PCO), regulators (ERCB, AER & ASRB), industry / industry associations (CAPP, ACR, CAC, Shell, Talisman, CAGC, Coral Hill and CEPA), NGOs (CASA, AWC, ELC, Pembina, and Keepers of the Athabasca), Métis and First Nations.

Framing Question

How might we collaboratively design a vision of a risk management framework that, across players of the energy system, will better anticipate, assess and guard against risks? In the short term, how might we explore possibilities to increase flexibility and to expand the tool kit to manage risk, while maintaining the integrity in the regulatory system?

The new risk management system is viewed through an analogy to the water cycle in the photo on the right. The system is driven by a clear set of social, environmental, and economic outcomes, represented by the sun. The cloud shows a diverse set of stakeholders and right holders (including treaty rights) coming together from the very start of the risk management process. Stakeholders are depicted not just within the risk management process, but also within the system: they live in houses by the lake and on boats that are affected by ripples and rising tides. The new risk management system is not created from scratch: there is a legacy system that will continue to shape the future system. A lightning cloud represents some of the negative aspects of this legacy (such as the ad-hoc and adversarial approach to stakeholder engagement), but there is also a strong foundation of traditional knowledge and existing risk management processes to build upon, which is represented by the mountains. In the bottom left corner, wild fires create risks and harm to the system, but also catalyze regeneration, renewal, and adaptation.
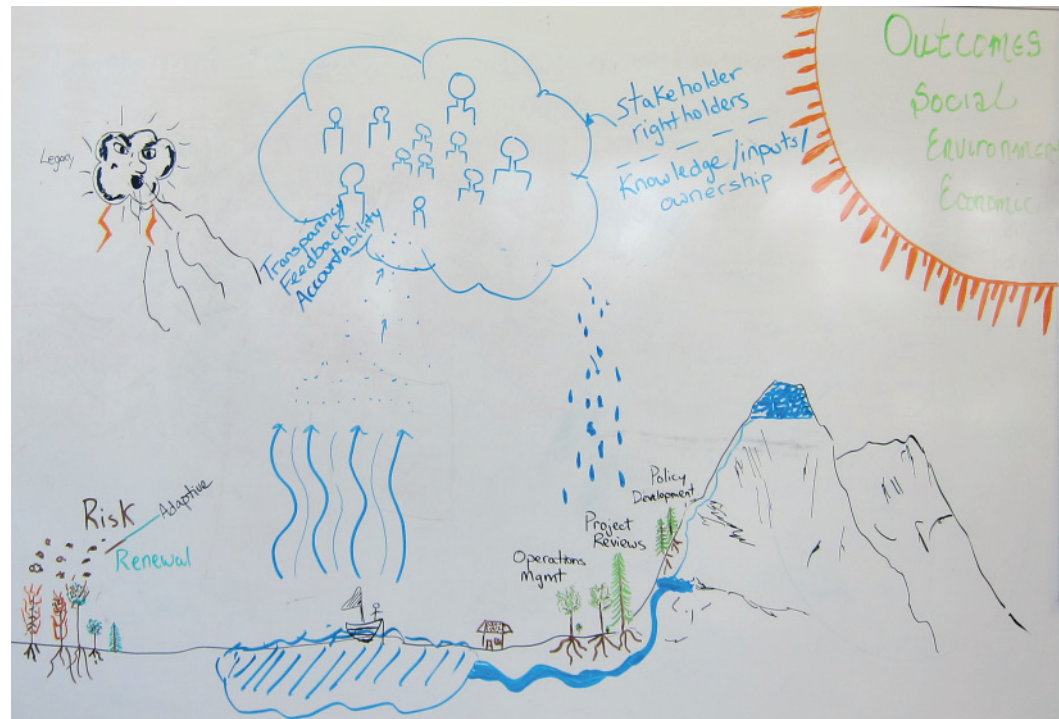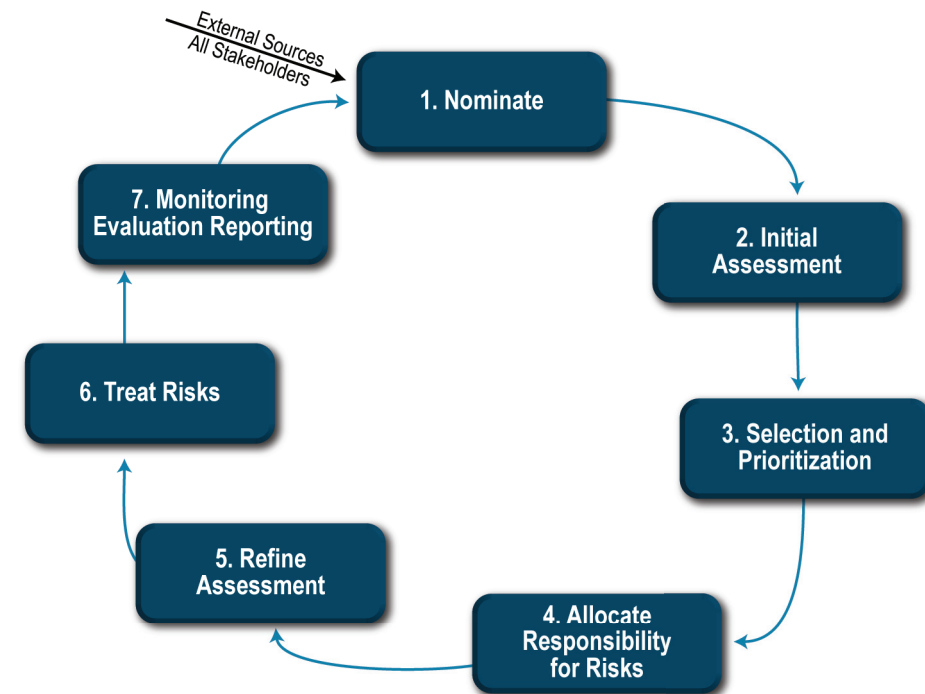

A rich picture of the new risk management system.

Common Risk Management Framework

Key Shifts

From	To
Adversarial approach	Integrative approach
Case-by-case intervention	Overarching framework: risk criteria
Narrow definition of value	Societal and ethical value
Duty to consult	Listen to stakeholders

Why Change?	To responsibly manage Alberta's resources.
What Will Change?	Modernize the regulatory framework for upstream oil, gas, oil sands and coal.
How Will it Change?	By regulating based on a coordinated, adaptive risk management framework, characterized by trust, clarity, certainty, transparency, and data sharing.

Feedback

"This workshop gave me a better understanding of why we need a common risk management framework and what my part of it is."

Key Insights

- The Common Risk Management Framework (CRMF) nests within the broader Integrated Resource Management System.

- The CRMF is underpinned by trust, clarity, certainty, transparency, and data sharing.

- The CRMF should be efficient and effective; fair and reasonable; transparent and accountable; integrated and adaptive; protective and precautionary; and in adherence with Métis and treaty rights.

- The current system for risk management is ad hoc, project-oriented, and does not meet the needs of stakeholders.

- Stakeholder engagement and shared data are critical for keeping the risk management system running smoothly.

- Value must be defined broadly to include social and ethical, as well as economic value.

- Creating a centralized risk registry helps to prioritize and treat risk areas, and can enable a more consultative and tailored approach to project approval.

External Sources
All Stakeholders

1. Nominate

2. Initial Assessment

3. Selection and Prioritization

4. Allocate Responsibility for Risks

5. Refine Assessment

6. Treat Risks

7. Monitoring Evaluation Reporting

The common risk assessment process.

Understanding the IRM 'System'

Context

Duration: July 2013

Sponsor: Rick Blackwood, ESRD

Participants: Members from the Integrated Resource Management Transition Team, as well as invited guests.


Framing Question

How might we…
1. Develop a model of the IRM 'System' that visualizes its functions and players?
2. Develop a comprehensive list of the functions and roles of players?
3. Identify players' functions within the IRM 'System', beyond primary organizations?
4. Begin to explore and identify relationships between players and throughout the system?

Embarking into the unknown space between where we are today and where we want to go in the future requires an approach that recognizes and values the various roles and functions that specific actors have in a system. The IRM 'System' workshop allowed participants to design and explore these functions through a model merging exercise.

By merging models, participants collaborated to co-create a cube diagram (pictured right) that offers a three-dimensional illustration of the IRM 'System'. Similar in design to the popular puzzle Rubik's Cube, the cube offers a systemic illustration of the IRM 'System' built on three planes: media, actors, and functions. Within each plane are layers where program functions are located. The idea is that if one is to slice through the entire cube one could clearly see the connections between media, actors, and function. Strong coordinating processes and mechanisms are integral to integrating and maintaining all of these systemic actors.
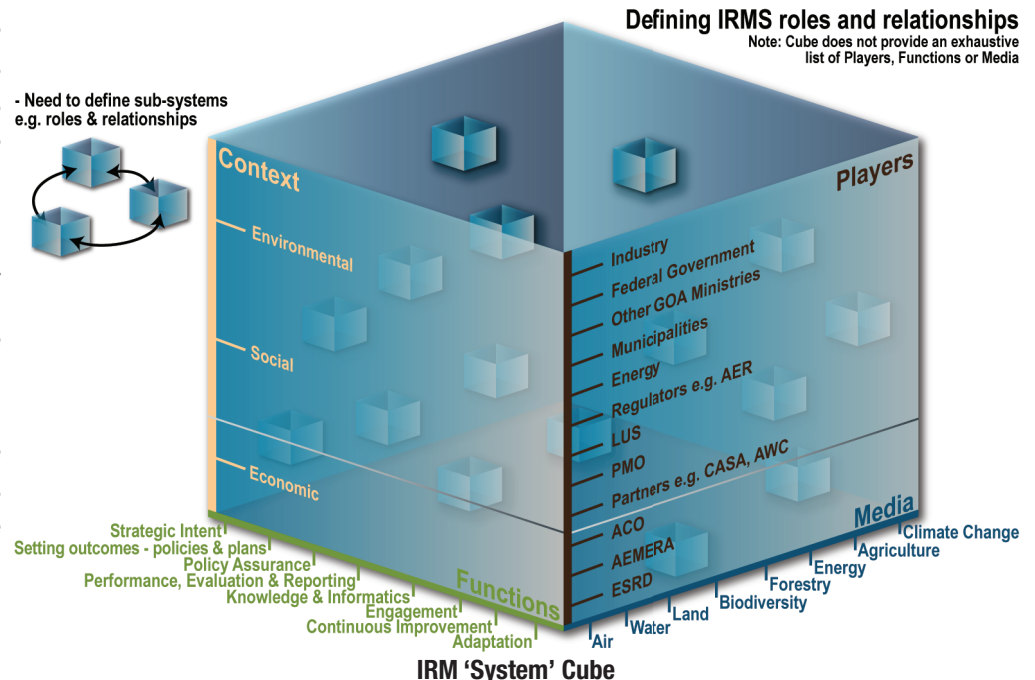
IRM 'System' Cube

Understanding the IRM 'System'

Outcomes

The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to come together and collectively share their thoughts and opinions regarding the nature of the IRM 'System', and what it should seek to achieve.

An example of this includes a shared vision of what attributes would be seen as part of a successful IRM system. These include:

- Clear integrated and aligned outcomes, policies, and plans
- Integrated, modern, policy assurance
- Open, transparent, science-based environmental monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Strong relationships with partners and stakeholders

- Continuous improvement and adaptation
- Performance Measures
- Strategic directions

Feedback

"This was a useful exercise to collectively define the future state of IRMS and its current state of complexity."

IRM System Sensemaking Session.

Key Insights

- We need a common language for discussing IRM 'System'.

- We all hold different mental models about what the IRM 'System' means and looks like. Our backgrounds and ideological positions inform how we perceive and talk the IRM 'System' e.g., function-based focus, relationship-based focus.

- "Science-based" is not understood.

- Limited resources may hinder our ability to collaborate and maintain momentum for achieving a successful IRM 'System'.

- Establish the type of common vision needed to articular where we are going e.g., end state or outcomes.

- Account for the differences in culture within and throughout departments in the 'System'.

- Remain clear that we are developing an IRM 'System' that is not only focused on the environment but balances social and economic dimensions as well.

Energy Literacy

Context

Duration: August 2013 – March 2014

Sponsor: Chris Van Tighem, Energy

Participants: 30 participants from the Government of Alberta (Energy, ESRD, ARD, Education, TPR, and Service Alberta) and energy-related regulators (AER, AESO, and AUC).

Framing Question

How might stakeholders and government reframe energy literacy?

Fragmented. Unintuitive. Inaccessible. Often misunderstood. A work in progress. Evolving and ongoing. Participants in our workshop stated that while energy literacy is empowering and potentially transformative, the initiative will need a sustained collaborative effort to advance. Overall, the group recognized that Albertans need quality information on energy and that government is arguably the best provider.

To understand the role of the Government of Alberta in energy literacy, the group mapped the perspectives of the three most relevant groups: government, industry and the public. The group determined that government efforts are siloed and impeded by an internal lack of energy literacy. The graphic to the right shows how spread apart these efforts are and how many types of efforts they encompass. The public is bombarded with messages, skeptical of government and industry sources, and overall concerned primarily with the cost of energy. Industry's energy literacy agenda was generally considered suspicious and possibly manipulative, though the group also recognized that industry is diverse in both the energy it produces and the quality information of information it provides. Overall, each actor group considers energy literacy valuable and understands that collaboration is necessary to advance it.

Government, industry and the public each have different perspectives on energy literacy and its aims.
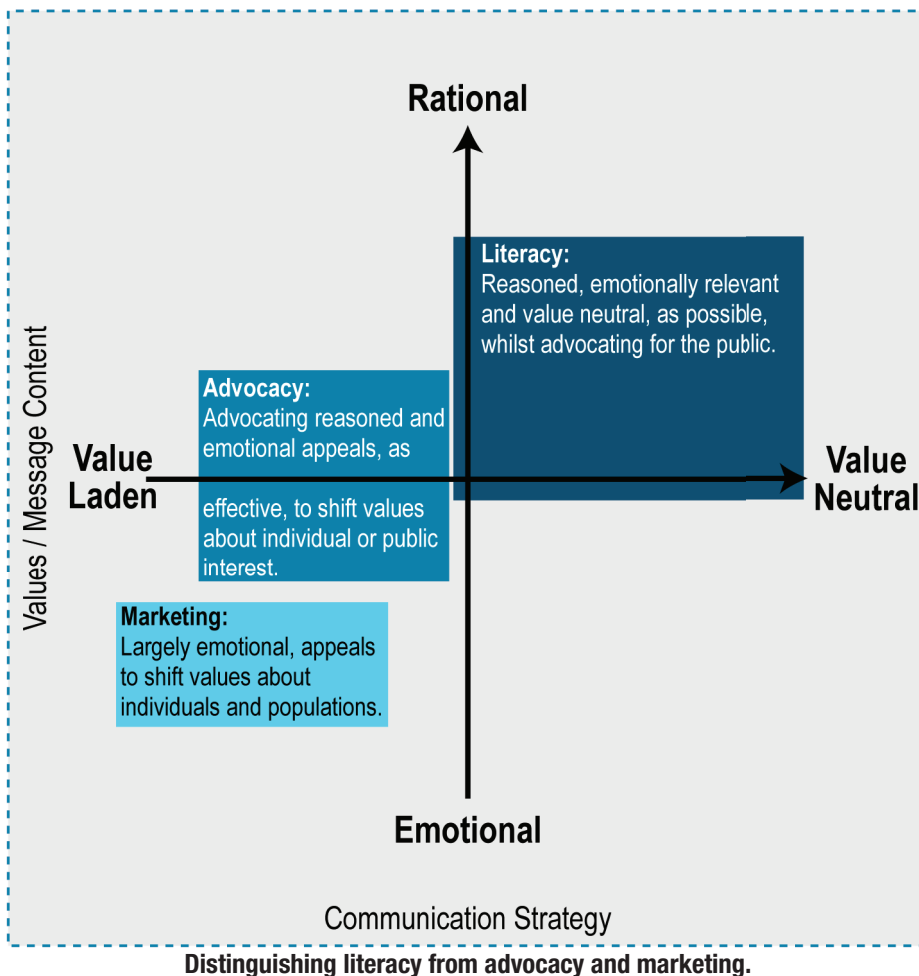
Energy Literacy

Key Shifts

From	To
Fragmented	Centralized
Unintuitive	Intelligible
Inaccessible	Accessible
Distrust of government	GoA is a champion of energy literacy

Feedback

"The findings of the workshops and the systemic design process were crucial in providing a nuanced view of energy literacy to the new leadership team within the Branch as well as an appreciation of relevant issues and opportunities."

Key Insights

- Energy literacy has three main perspectives: government, public and industry.

- Each perspective has important differences, particularly in how the information is presented (i.e. information-only or advocacy) and received (i.e. questions of unbiased sources).

- The perspectives also share one important commonality: energy literacy is valuable and collaboration will better advance information.

- Questions remain about the Government of Alberta's role and purpose in the energy literacy agenda. However, the group agreed that the desired future state is for the GOA champion energy literacy, speaking with one clear voice, providing information in a central location, and actively engaging citizens in learning.

- Possible future actions include developing:
  - A literacy action plan; and
  - An arms-length agency to provide information to consumers, encouraging collaboration from academia, government professional associations, marketers, and educators.

Rational

Literacy:
Reasoned, emotionally relevant and value neutral, as possible, whilst advocating for the public.

Value Laden

Advocacy:
Advocating reasoned and emotional appeals, as effective, to shift values about individual or public interest.

Value Neutral

Marketing:
Largely emotional, appeals to shift values about individuals and populations.

Values / Message Content

Emotional

Communication Strategy

Distinguishing literacy from advocacy and marketing.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Context

Duration: 9 – 10 October 2014

Sponsor: Walter Espinoza, Transportation

Participants: Representatives from Alberta Transportation, Enterprise and Advanced Education, Justice and Solicitor General, and Service Alberta, the City of Calgary, the City of Edmonton, the University of Alberta, and the Alberta Motor Transport Association.

Framing Question

- How might we better support Alberta's multi-modal transportation system through Information and Communication Technologies?
- What should the future of Intelligent Transportation Systems look like in Alberta?
- What are the key challenges and how might we overcome them?

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) refer to the application of a broad range of information and communication technologies to improve safety, efficiency, and performance of the transportation system.

Participants worked in four groups representing the public, industry, government, and emergency as well as law enforcement. Through the use of empathy maps, the four groups first painted a picture of what Alberta's transportation system might look like in the absence of new ITS initiatives in the next twenty years (see image on the right).   The groups then described what a desired future state of ITS would look like via mind maps and rich pictures.

Finally, participants identified potential ways to overcome the main challenges that stand in the way of achieving the desired future of ITS for Alberta.
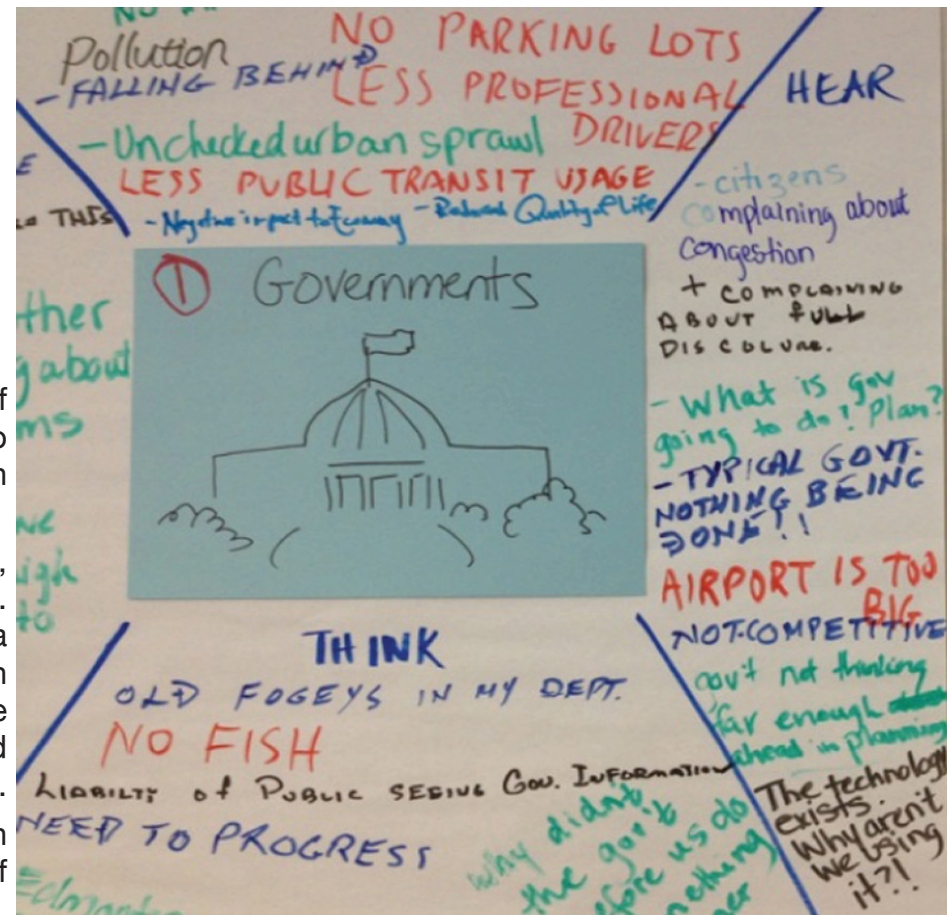
Empathy map of the transportation system in the absense of new ITS initiatives from a government perspective.

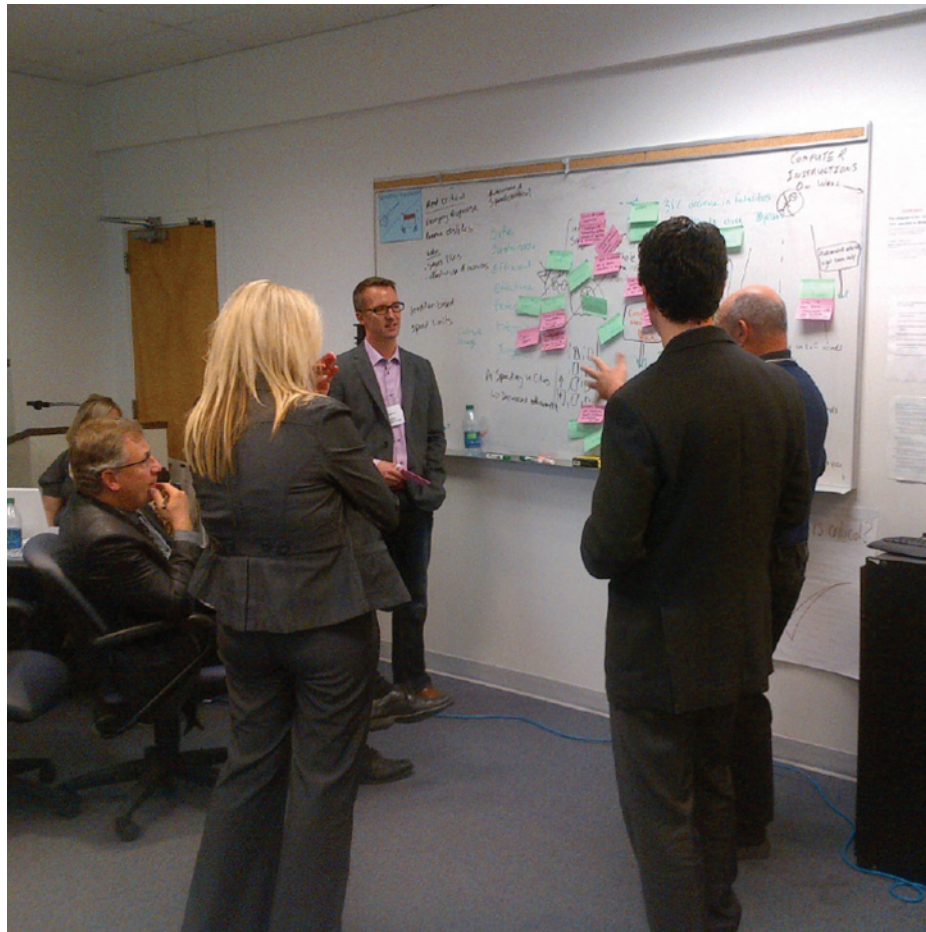# Intelligent Transportation Systems

Key Shifts

From

Dangerous
Reactive traffic management
Legacy data systems
Disparate data standards

To

Safe roads
Proactive traffic management
Operable and efficient systems
Homogeneous data standards

Feedback

"Good interaction between all involved, and some good ideas."

Discussing potential solutions to overcome key obstacles.

Key Insights

- Many agencies are already using ITS technologies, such as remote cameras, to enhance the transportation system.

- Better ITS planning, research, and implementation is needed now to prepare us for the changes that technologies like autonomous vehicles will bring to safety, mobility, and the environment.

- Further adoption of ITS technologies could improve traffic flow, enhance road safety, facilitate emergency response, streamline the dissemination of information, and improve competitiveness.

- However, several challenges exist, including lack of public awareness of ITS solutions, lack of operability among existing data systems, high technology costs, and regulatory uncertainty.

- While few would dispute the value of ITS, different stakeholders have differing priorities around the types of ITS applications implemented and their locations.

- Key areas where improvements could be made include: improving interagency partnerships; addressing antiquated standards and sporadic funding; better communicating successes to the public; and integrating multiple data systems.

Alberta Tourism Framework

Context

Duration: March 2014

**Sponsor:** Dana Woodworth, Tourism, Parks and Recreation

Participants: 18 participants from TPR, Travel Alberta, Culture, Agriculture, Transportation, AR, IAE, JSTL, and IIR.

To the right shows a map participants created of the tourism system. The traveller experience was placed at the centre of the map. Different kinds of travellers were identified, such as leisure travellers, business travellers, and residents. Other stakeholders in the tourism system were grouped into several themes. Demand captured those stakeholders who helped to grow demand for Alberta tourism, such as Travel Alberta, CTC, and airports. Supply captured actors who supplied tourism goods and services, such as food and beverage, car rental, and provincial and federal parks. The whole of GoA, Agencies Boards and Commissions bubbles were shown as dashed because they were not fully coherent. The supply side was depicted as highly fragmented, with fracture lines running between stakeholders. Infrastructure contained mostly government actors who may not interface directly with tourists, but provide information and communications technology, roads, a trained workforce, etc. that enable tourism suppliers. The Impacted theme collated actors who felt the effects (positive and negative) of the tourism industry, even if they were not part of the industry: Albertans, small towns, communities, and the youth for example. International stakeholders were primarily international visitors to Alberta, and social media actors outside Canada. A final theme collected Context factors that influenced the tourism system: Alberta's cold climate, low population, and large distances. Elected officials spanned across multiple themes, and were represented along the left hand side of the map.

Framing Question

- How do we bring the Alberta Tourism Framework to life?
- How do we develop a shared vision and grow common understanding?
- What are the future investment opportunities?
- How do we tell a story that is consistent across stakeholders and forward looking?
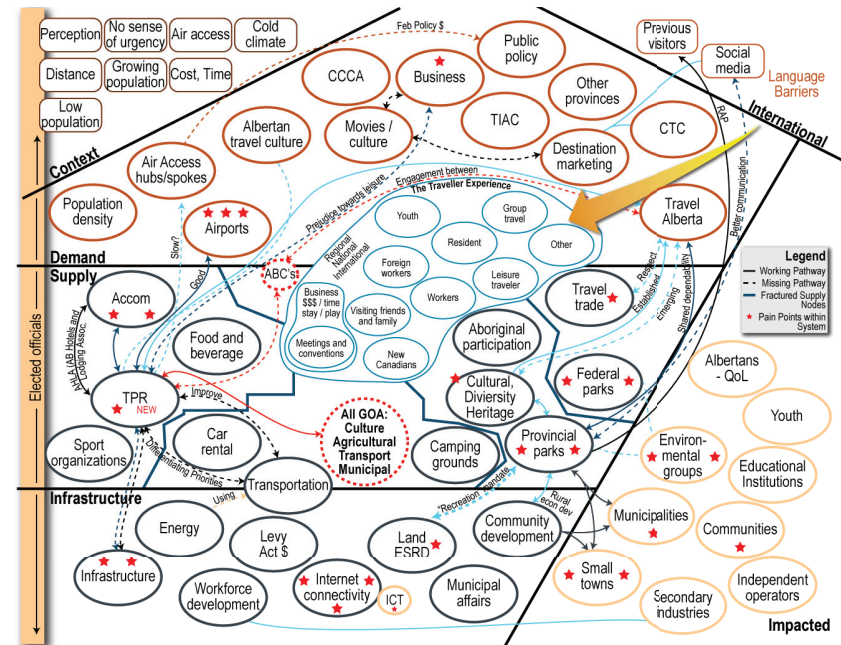
A map of the tourism system.

Alberta Tourism Framework

Key Shifts

| From	To
$10.3 billion tourism target	Building the Visitor Economy
Focus on tourists	Focus on travelers
Fragmented system	Exceptional traveler experience
Getting buy-in to our Tourism Framework	Sitting down together to identify mutually beneficial outcomes

Feedback

"Interesting and helpful approach to a potential conflict situation in an interesting sector."
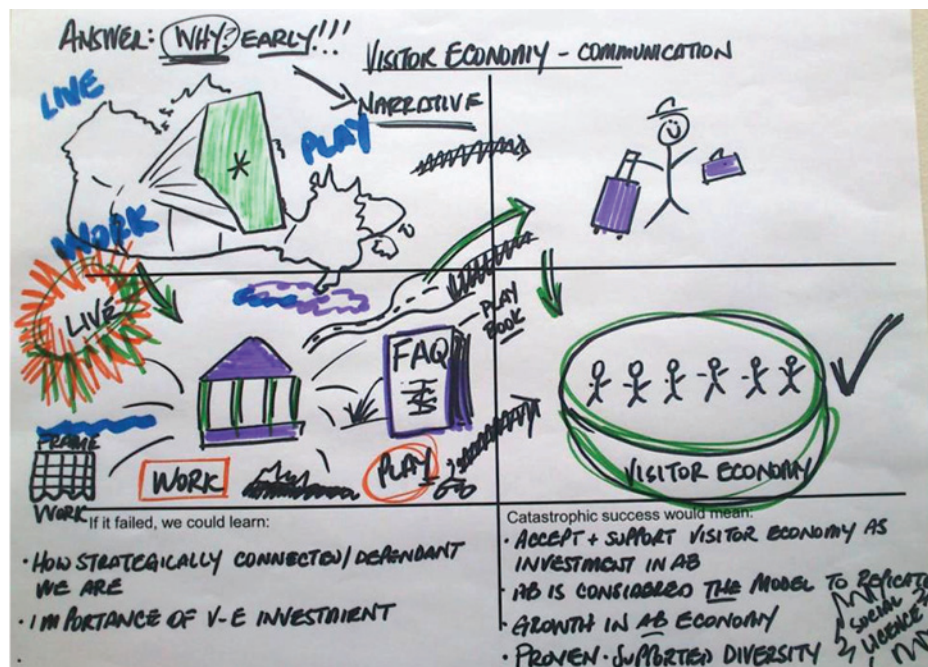
A Storyboard of Visitor Economy Communication.

Key Insights

- $10.3 billion tourism target was reframed to building the Visitor Economy. This focused the group on adding value across the triple bottom line.

- Traveller might be the heart of this complex, multi-sectoral, fragmented system but the quality of their experiences currently isn't.

- A focus on creating an exceptional traveller experience at every touch point grows the Visitor Economy and motivates collaboration between government, industry, and other stakeholders.

- Collaboration means working together to co-create shared value, not seeking buy-in to the Alberta Tourism Framework.

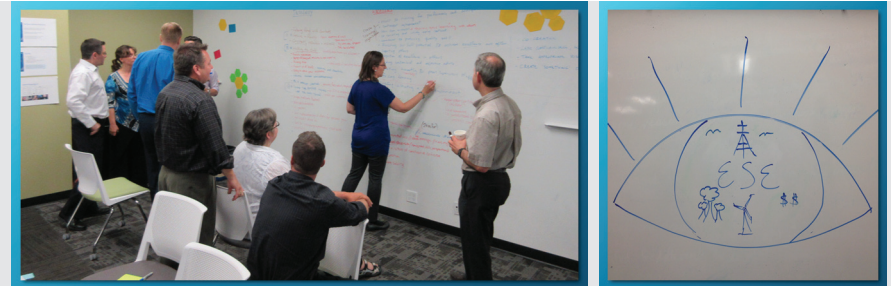- We have plenty of great ideas on opportunities for investment and collaboration, so let's do it!
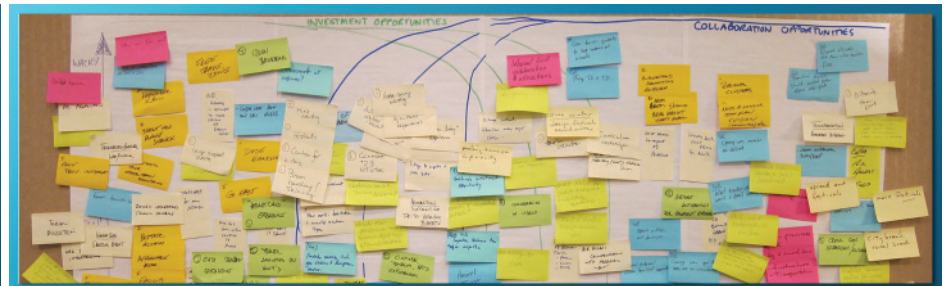
Electricity and Sustainable Energy

Context

Duration: July 2014

Sponsor: James Allen, Electricity and Sustainable Energy

Participants: 18 representatives across the three branches of the Electricity and Sustainable Energy Division (ESED).


Framing Question

How might we establish a better understanding of the division, identify the environment in which it works, draft a vision and mission, and make the division a better team?

The working group employed the McKinsey 7S Model to outline the cultural and operational approaches to their work. This allowed the group to understand and assess how it currently functions in order to draw conclusions on how it ought to function.

The McKinsey 7S model involves seven interdependent factors which are categorized as either a "hard" or "soft" element. "Hard" elements are easier to define or identify and management can directly influence them (strategy, structure and systems). "Soft" elements, on the other hand, can be more difficult to describe, and are less tangible and more influenced by culture (shared values, skills, style and staff).

Focusing on shared values, the group believed that the Alberta Public Service pillars (respect, accountability, integrity, and excellence) were a good base, but to reach the desired level of success the group will also need to add collaboration, fun and joy, humor, and creativity to their shared values. These new values will help encourage the behavior and mechanisms needed to make the division a better team.
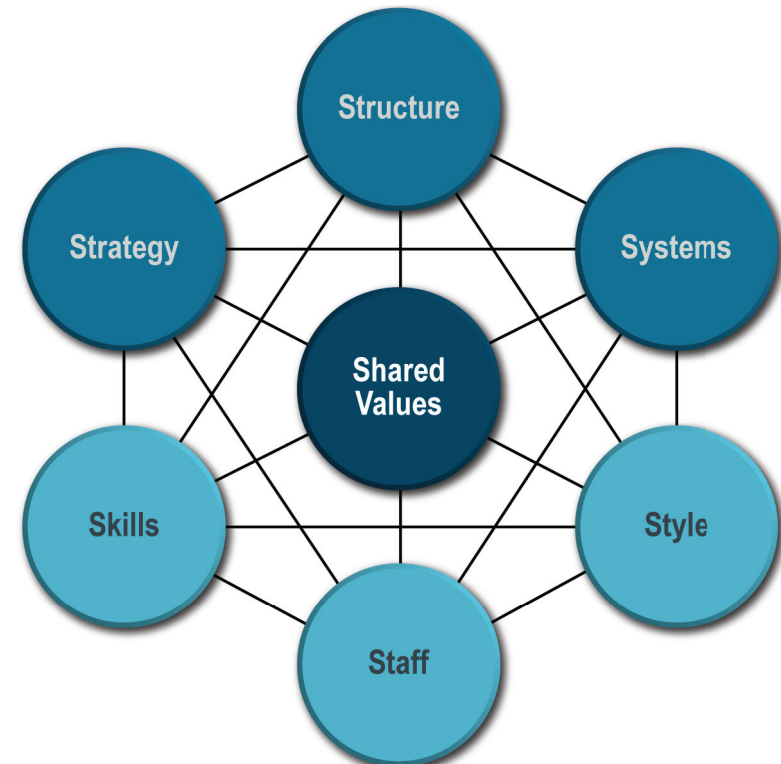
The group used the McKinsey 7S Model to help build a shared perspective.

Electricity and Sustainable Energy

Outcomes

The workshop enabled a shared understanding of perspectives within the division, all of government and related agencies, and the outside world of the province and beyond. With the high-level vision and mission of the division in mind, the group explored how to achieve these results in their daily work as shared values. The group recognized that they are missing role clarity and important shared values such as collaboration, joy, humor, and creativity.

Feedback

"Remarkable way to build comradery and get us to a shared understanding of what we know and what we still need to explore."

"The facilitators were amazingly sharp at distilling messy information into something coherent."

Key Insights

- Overall, the working group shared an understanding of the issues it faces, a willingness to engage in conflict rich / crucial conversations, and a number of ideas to improve its work.

- While the APS values structure provides the division with the essential shared values, the group recognized that they need to expand this system by adding collaboration, joy, and creativity.

- Portfolios for carbon capture and storage (CCS) and sustainable or alternative and renewable (A&R) energy feel 'bolted-on' to the major policy shop of Electricity.

- New or better processes or job functions must be developed to balance short-term demands (e.g. ARs) and long-term priorities (e.g. strategy and policy).

- The division may need to add personnel with expertise in accounting and / or grant management.

- Whatever changes are made, the division must maintain its deep content knowledge.

A and R

Electricity

CCS

Energy

Past

Current
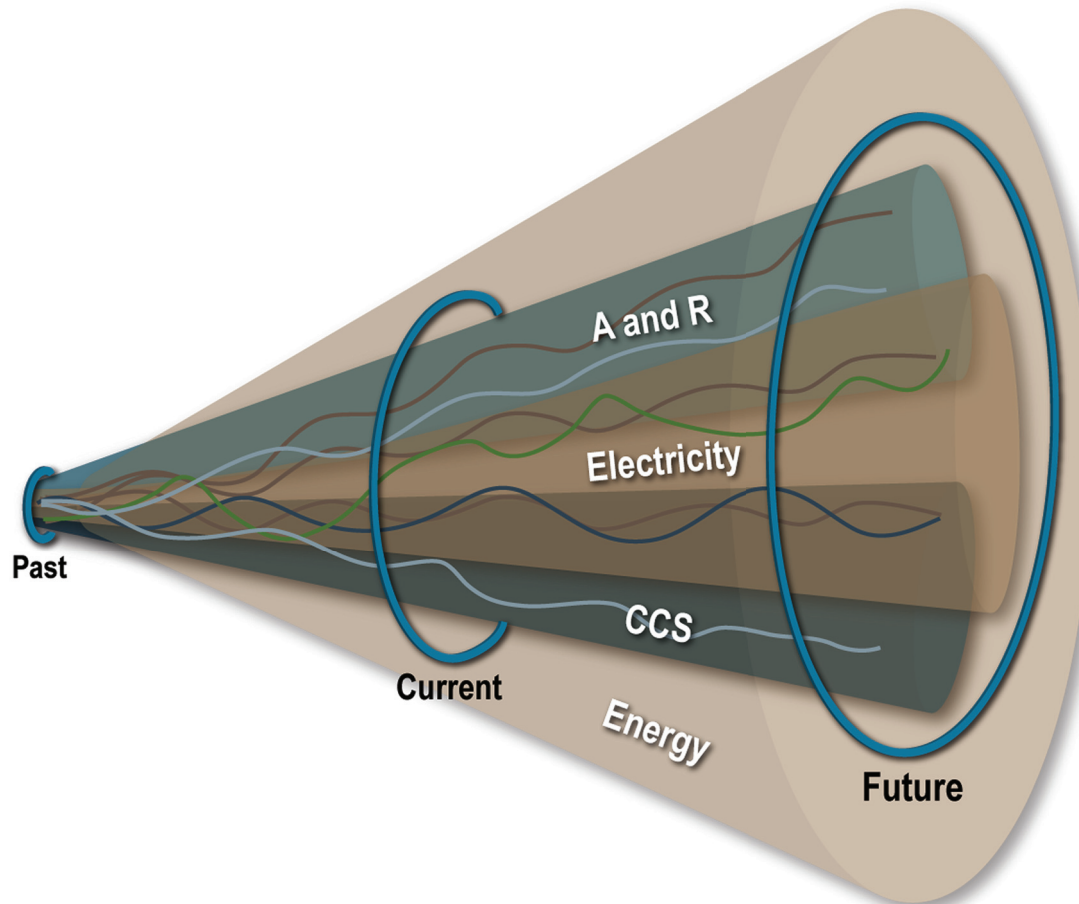
Future

Desired future state: full integration of CCS and A&R energy into electricity portfolio.

Enterprise Solutions to Digital Communications

Context

Duration: 16 – 17 July 2014

**Sponsor:** Olga Michailides, Public Affairs Bureau

Participants: 19 participants from PAB, IAE SA, JSG, Energy, ESRD, Health, and JSTL.

Framing Question

- How might we create a common path forward for digital communications to help engage more effectively with Albertans?
- How might we effectively use strategy, governance and resources to make this change?

Through the use of an 'Iceberg' analysis three main problem areas were identified: Strategy, Governance and Resources. In order to address these issues, different ministries and stakeholders will need work together. Personas were developed to anticipate the reactions ministries could have to the proposed changes. These personas revealed potential motivations for resisting change and helped the group generate solutions for addressing them. In order to respond to the mind-set "this is how we've always done it", two tactics were used. These were to continually ask "why", and say "no" in order to return to the findings that everything must have a purpose and benefit the user. In the end, a five page narrative was created which delves deep into the proposed solutions and illustrates their potential benefits.
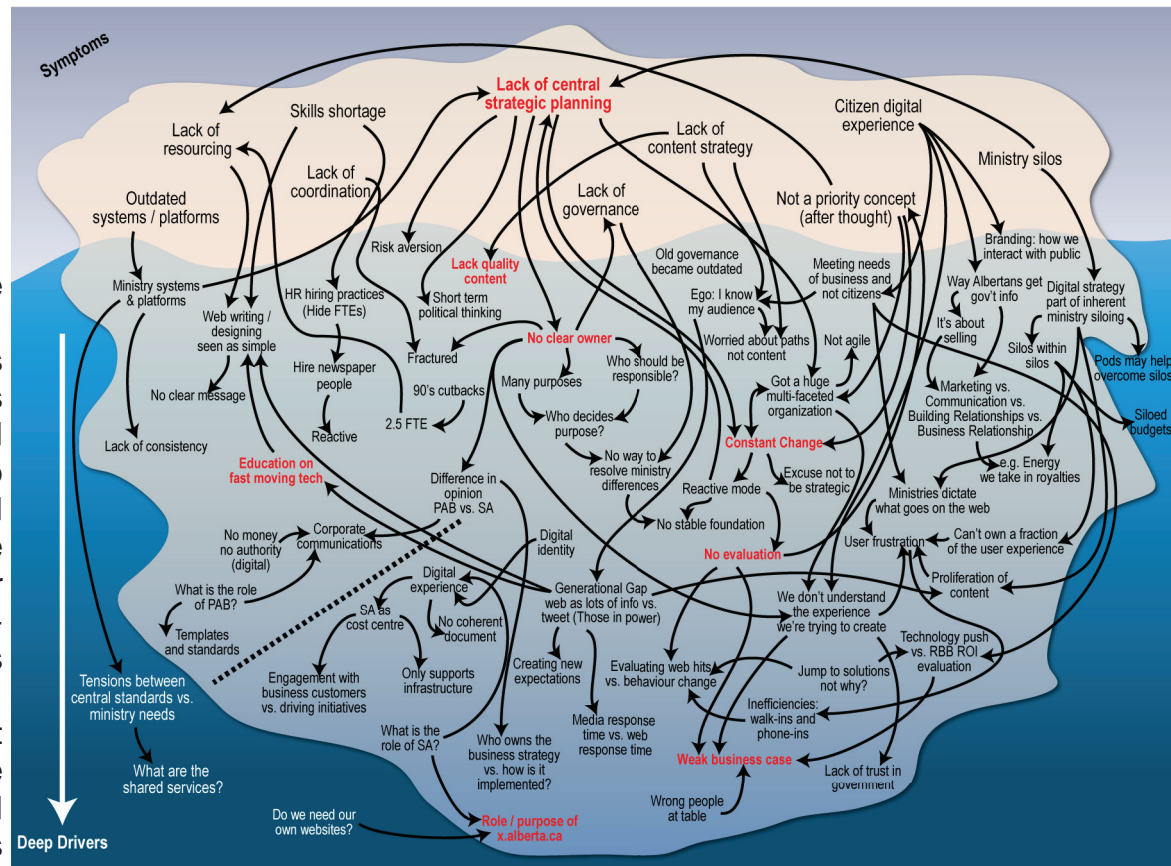
An 'Iceberg' analysis of the system.

Enterprise Solutions to Digital Communications

Key Shifts

From

Over 400 different GOA web-sites with no consistent and format or structure

Existing web sites are ministry-centric: content is driven by what management wants, not what the public needs

To

Proposed web committee with authority resources to monitor and ensure ensure consistency across all government digital services
Understanding that public needs trump ministry initiatives

Feedback

"If you want to change your thinking or become unstuck, this is the process."

Governance	Strategy	Resources
• Educate people about standards	• Show savings associated with strategy (money and time)	• Identify the root of the problem, not the critical point where we throw resources at the problem
• Show consequences of not doing things properly (loss of time, money, resources, etc)	• Show positive results to those who are reluctant	• Utilize skills, don't let them atrophy
• Clarify roles	• Always include evaluation and analysis	• Follow governance and strategy to allocate resources
• Rebuild: "Act as if your website has just been nuked"	• Move ministry egos in the right direction	• Communicate and collaborate between groups to break down silos
• Everyone works from a single playbook	• Justify decisions based on evidence, not anecdotes	
• Hire a "Web Boss"	• Ask "why", justify "no"	
• Ensure Albertans are heard and needs are being met		
• Create an approval system for content and decisions		
• People talking with each other at all levels		

Proposed solutions to each of the problem areas.

Key Insights

- Regulations around what is posted and how long it stays posted are needed. This can be done by building a cohesive strategy.

- We need to support each other, set direction and ensure consistent quality across the GoA's online presence. This can be done by focusing on governance.

- Resources (monetary, human, and technical) must not be wasted; skills need to be used effectively and IT resourced employed with purpose. We must not operate within silos.

- Multiple ministries and stakeholders must be involved to develop a standard, change-resistant look and feel across government.

- Buy-in must happen at the executive level. Address concerns from decision-makers by demonstrating early successes and sharing reasons behind the changes; give reassurance that they will be represented and not lose resources; and provide a catalyst to force the need for change to the forefront.

Systemic Design Training Pilot Course

Context

Duration: 5 – 7 and 20 – 22 May 2014

Sponsor: Strategic Energy Secretariat, Alberta Energy

Participants: 19 public servants from across government, including Health, Education, Innovation and Advanced Education, Municipal Affairs, Energy, and Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Framing Question

- What is systemic design?
- What is the value of applying systemic design in public policy?
- What tools could participants use to deal with complexity in their own work?

The six-day course provided participants with the opportunity to explore the theory and practice of systemic design as an emerging methodology to deal with complexity of public policy.

The workshop guided participants through a live cross-ministry issue – developing an evaluation framework for Reaching Our Full Potential (ROFP). Participants gained hands-on experience through interactive skill-building exercises, dedicated discussion time, and applying different systemic design tools, such as rich picture, causal layered analysis, and influence diagram.

The course culminated with the group presenting an evaluation framework to Kelly Tyler, Chair of the Evaluation Team for ROFP (pictured right). As such, the workshop resulted in a client deliverable. At the same time, the workshop allowed participants to build a practical tool-set that can be applied immediately in their daily work.
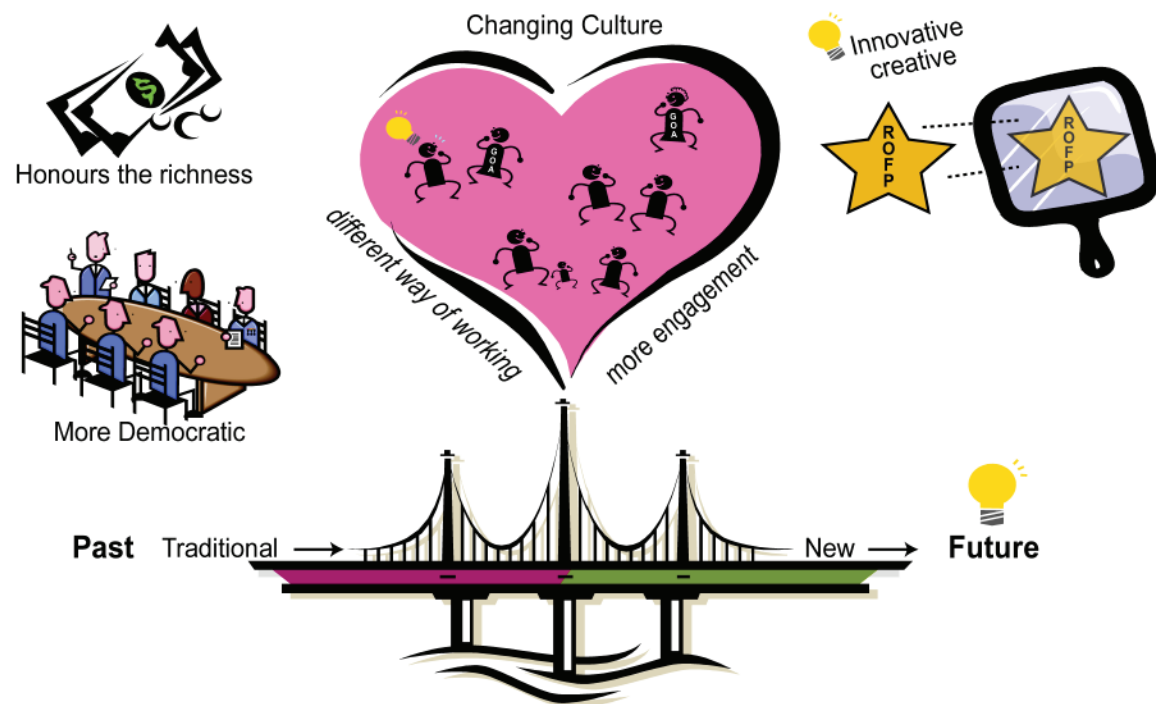
Rich picture of the value of the evaluation framework participants developed during the training course pilot.

Systemic Design Training Pilot Course

Outcomes

Participants developed practitioner-level skills and knowledge of systemic design and learned to combine tools to make sense of ambiguity as well as elicit innovative solutions.

Beyond the course, some participants applied systemic design methodology and tools to their own projects or work topics. For example, participants from Innovation and Advanced Education used systemic design to rethink and redesign the policy process in their own ministry.

Feedback

"An interactive training course – as we are learning to shift mind-sets, we had to work equally hard to change our own!"

"I really enjoy facilitating and am excited to try out these new tools!"

Prototyping "Reaching our Full Potential" evaluation.

Key Insights

- Systemic design can be understood as a mind-set, a methodology, and a set of tools.

- Systemic design can help identify the right problems in the face of differing perspectives; translate strategic directions into actions; deliver rapid interventions; and create accountability for issues that fall between the gaps.

- Systemic design entails a number of activities, most notably:

    - mapping the current system;
    - understanding the legacy system;
    - reframing or seeing the same problem from a different view;
    - mapping the future state;
    - identifying the systems of support and opposition;
    - understanding users' needs and preferences; and
    - generating options and prototyping.

- During the course, participants acknowledged the need for ROFP evaluation to move away from being an intermittent or punitive exercise.
  It should be embedded and lead to continuous learning.

- Participants developed three physical prototypes of the ROFP evaluation framework, including a newscast-like storytelling video.

Notes, Thoughts and Comments

Notes, Thoughts and Comments

Systemic Design Portfolio

2013 – 2014

CoLab.